

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 3563

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GR BU

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ZHIVKOV'S VISIT TO ATHENS

1. PRESIDENT ZHIVKOV OF BULGARIA'S THREE DAY VISIT TO GREECE, APRIL 9-11, WAS LONG ON ATMOSPHERICS BUT SHORT ON SUBSTANCE. BUT THE WARM ATMOSPHERE THAT SURROUNDED IT WAS NO MEAN ACHIEVEMENT SINCE GREECE AND BULGARIA HAVE MOSTLY SHARED ONLY ENMITY IN THE PAST. THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE VISIT STARTS OFF BY REITERATING THAT "THERE IS NO MATTER OF DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES." AND PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS MAY HAVE PUT IT BEST WHEN HE TOLD THE PRESS THAT FOR ALL THE GRECO-BULGARIAN COOPERATION IN OTHER AREAS, THE GREATEST PROGRESS IN THEIR RELATIONS HAS BEEN MADE IN THE "PSYCHOLOGICAL FIELD."

2. THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE, OF COURSE, CONTAINED NO SURPRISES. THERE WERE THE EXPECTED REFERENCES TO AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, ENDORSEMENTS OF SUCH MATTERS AS DETENTE (WITH REFERENCE TO MBFR), DISARMAMENT, CYPRUS, THE MIDDLE EAST
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AND SO FORTH, WHENEVER NECESSARY COUCHED IN PROPERLY

VAGUE TERMS TO CONFORM TO THE SIGNATORS WELL-KNOWN POSITIONS. IN OBVIOUS DEFERENCE TO BULGARIS'S POSITION ON INTER-BALKAN COOPERATION, THE COMMUNIQUE PLAYED UP THE MERITS OF BILATERAL EFFORTS WHILE MAKING ONLY A VERY TEPID ENDORSEMENT OF THE MULTILATERAL APPROACH EMBODIED IN THIS YEAR'S "CONFERENCE OF EXPERTS ON MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN BULGARIA, GREECE, ROMANIA..." ET AL. (REFERRING TO THE ATHENS BALKAN MEETING, THE COMMUNIQUE STATES THAT "THE TWO PARTIES DECLARED SUPPORT FOR THE COOPERATION AMONG BALKAN COUNTRIES WHICH SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT IN THE SPIRIT OF REALISM AND ALSO IN SECTORS WHICH ARE GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE AND OF COMMON INTEREST.")

3. THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE AND THE PUBLIC REMARKS OF BOTH GREEK LEADERS AND ZHIVKOV CELEBRATED THE ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS. THE COMMUNIQUE MADE GENEROUS REFERENCES TO FUTURE COOPERATION "IN ALL SECTORS, ESPECIALLY IN TRADE, INDUSTRY, TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS, TOURISM, ELECTRIC POWER AND HYDROECONOMICS." ZHIVKOV WENT SO FAR AS TO STATE PUBLICLY THAT TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS TREBLED LAST YEAR, A CLAIM THAT DOES NOT CONFORM TO STATISTICS AVAILABLE HERE. ACCORDING TO THE BANK OF GREECE FIGURES FOR JAN-NOV 1975 TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO REACHED ALMOST \$60 MILLION, AN INCREASE OF ALMOST 88PC OVER 1974, ABOUT ONE PERCENT OF GREECE'S FOREIGN TRADE.

4. ZHIVKOV HANDLED HIMSELF WELL WITH THE LOCAL PRESS AND IN THE COURSE OF HIS ENCOUNTERS WITH THEM MADE ONE OR TWO COMMENTS OF INTEREST. THUS, HE RECALLED THAT TEN YEARS AGO BULGARIA RENOUNCED ALL TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AGAINST OTHER BALKAN STATES, INCLUDING GREECE, AND THEN REITERATED THAT POSITION. PROBED ON THE BULGARIAN POSITION ON THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION, HE DELIVERED WHAT SEEMS IS A FULL BULGARIAN PUBLIC POSITION ON THE MATTER WHICH MAY BE WORTH QUOTING HERE IN FULL: "THE 'MACEDONIAN' PROBLEM, AS AN INTERNAL BULGARIAN PROBLEM, DOES NOT EXIST. MACEDONIA FOR US IS A GEOGRAPHIC TERM. THE POINT IS, HWAT IS THE ETHNIC GROUP OF THE POPULATION LIVING THERE. THIS IS A SUBJECT WHICH CONCERNS GREECE, AND I BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE RIGHT OF THE POPULATION LIVING THERE TO DETERMINE TO

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WHAT NATION IT BELONGS TO. IN THE SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA, THERE EXISTS THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA. THE NATIONALITY OF THE PEOPLE LIVING IN THIS REPUBLIC CONCERNS ONLY THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE. IT IS A SUBJECT WHICH EXCLUSIVELY CONCERNS THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA. THE NATIONALITY OF THE PEOPLE LIVING IN BULGARIA IS A BULGARIAN MATTER, AND, ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION, IT IS THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN

BULGARIA TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN NATIONAL ORIGIN. THIS IS THEREFORE AN INTERNAL MATTER OF OURS AND IT CANNOT BE USED AS AN EXCUSE TO INTERVENE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF A STATE. THIS IS THE HELSINKI SPIRIT."

5. PRESS, TELEVISION, RADIO AND EDITORIAL TREATMENT OF THE VISIT WAS GENERALLY WARM AND EXTENSIVE. THE ONLY HOLD OUT HAS BEEN RIGHT-WING ELEFTHEROS COSMOS WHICH, WHILE ENDORSING THE IDEA OF THE VISIT, CALLED ON THE GREEK GOVERNMENT TO ESCHEW OVEREMPHASIZING FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS. THE PAPER HAS ALREADY EXPRESSED ITS DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT FOLLOW ITS ADVICE.

6. COMMENT: DETENTE BETWEEN THESE TWO NATIONS IS STILL A FRAGILE THING. FOR ALL ITS EFFORT TO BATHE THIS VISIT IN WARMTH, THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT IS UNDER NO ILLUSION ABOUT EITHER THE POTENTIAL DANGER FROM THE NORTH OR ZHIVKOV'S AUTONOMY FROM THE SOVIET UNION. BUT THE GOG IS INTERESTED IN PROMOTING IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, BOTH AS AN OBJECTIVE IN ITSELF AND AS A WAY FOR DISARMING THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION AT HOME. AND INDICATIONS SUGGEST THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS OF THIS VISIT ON BOTH THESE COUNTS.

7. FINALLY, WE WOULD NOTE THAT ZHIVKOV'S VISIT WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE BURIED EVEN MORE DEEPLY THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION AS AN ISSUE BETWEEN GREECE AND BULGARIA. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE HOW THIS MATTER IS HANDLED DURING THE COMING VISIT OF PRESIDENT TITO TO ATHENS (STILL REPORTED FOR SOMETIME IN MAY). AS FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT VIEWS THE GOY'S
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STAND ON MACEDONIA AS A LATENT, POTENTIAL ISSUE
BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.
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